Goal of Life

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Goal of Life

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Editors Note

These five lectures revolve around God, as the ultimate Goal of Life. The first lecture is introductory in content and the last one serves the purpose of summary and conclusion. The Introduction by thc first publisher has been retained to emphasize the usefulness of these lectures. It poses a crucial question: "Are all the pains and sufferings, which have made life so bitter for mankind today, not due to the lack of human recognition of the goal of life?"

Lecture one deals with the above question in the context of the prophetic missions. It points out, Creation has a goal which is one of achieving perfection - on the part of the created, as envisaged by the Creator. Prophetic missions are acknowledged as enhancing this process. In the light of the divine revelations, individuals are called upon to realize their potential-and achieve the goal of their respective life, which, in its perfectibility before eventual return to the Creator, is identical with that of all creations .

Lecture two points out that a school of philosophical thought needs spiritual ideals, too, so that both individuals and their societies have objectives to strive for. It emphasizes their inborn spiritual or conscientious responsibility to the Creator. ("If there were no God, everything would be permissible."). Its accomplishment is visualized on the basis of mutuality of human concern as part of the oneness of mankind.

Lecture three explains that faith is crucial to any school of thought or social ideology, in that it promotes love, affection and similar other virtues among people. In this context, it elaborates on the implications of monotheism in Islam, specially in lending a universal perspective that extends beyond dialectical materialism and humanism.

Lecture four examines Islamic Faith as a motive force for attaining human perfection. Having faith because it carries with it some beneficial effects is not considered a blessing in itself, since it requires to be constantly perfected. In fact, deriving benefits is not, or ought not to be, the aim. In the words of Ibn Sina it is like " working for a wage so that, without that wage, there would be no willingness to work". The relevant Islamic logic concerning prayers is well summed up by Hadrat Ali (a) when he said: "O' God. I do not worship you for fear of your Fire, nor for cupidity in desiring heaven; I worship you because you are worthy of it".

Lecture five evaluates various schools of thought concerning human perfection, including the views of Socrates, Plato, Gnostics and intellect- oriented divine philosophers. It concludes that God is not comparable to a father or anyone or anything else of the paternal kind. He is what He is and other things, too, are attributable to Him. As Sa'di's Boostan puts

it: "The way of intellect is a maze; but, for the wise, there is nothing but God ." Knowledge, wisdom, sense of justice, truth, beauty, liberty and loving others are all inculcated and enhanced for His sake even as His blessings. These deserve grateful acknowledgment not merely in formal worship, but through constant awareness and rectitude of action and behavior.

M. K. Ali

Mehr, 1361 A.H (Solar)

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Translator's Preface

The martyred scholar, Murtadha Mutahhari was born in 1918 in the village of Fariman of Mashad in Khorassan. He studied for 16 years at the Divinity College of Qum in the branches of literature, philosophy, jurisprudence and some other Islamic subjects, Then, for several years, he acted as professor of theology and philosophy in the same college and at Tehran University. Then he turned his attention to research which resulted in the publication of many books on religious, philosophical and social topics. He was an erudite and versatile scholar, as is proved by his numerous lectures, pamphlets and books, a total of 35 published works, the most well-known of which are "Islamic World Vision", "Man in the Qur'an", "Islamic Revolution", "Man and Faith", "Divine Justice", "Society and History", "Revelation and Prophethood". He was assassinated in the year 1980 in Tehran.

This book contains the five following lectures:

1. The Goal of Creation
2. The Basis of Individual and Social Ethics
3. Faith, schools of Thought and World Vision
4. Islamic Faith and Human Perfection
5. Summing up Islamic Monotheism

These lectures are closely connected in this way that they offer various ideas offered by various schools and particularly Islam concerning the goal of life and human perfection.

In this book the letters (s) and (a) stand respectively after the name of Muhammad and other prophets and Imams, as abbreviation for the following two phrases: "Greetings upon him and his household" for the Prophet, and "Peace be on him" for each Imam.

I wish to express my thanks to Mr. M. Khurshid Ali, editor of the Be'that Foundation for his

co- operation in reading the manuscript and making helpful suggestions.

A.P

Introduction by First Publisher

This book is a collection of five lectures delivered in 1972 on "Goal of Life", as part of a series called "World in Islamic Perspective."

In those years the matter of compiling a book entitled "Islamic World Perspective" and presenting it to the younger generation had attracted the attention of religiously enlightened people. This topic and its main outline was discussed in a small group consisting of not more than ten members.

It was Mutahhari's custom to propound an interesting topic many times in big and small sessions and subject it to criticism and analysis before it was presented to the public. Then, he would begin writing it in his charming style. His "Introduction to the Islamic World Perspective" was eventually written in the summer of 1978 in an abridged form under seven sections and gradually published in a series. (This collection is taken from a tape which is unfortunately not available.)

What encourages us to publish these lectures are the refined and original ideas of Mutahhari, which have their source in Islam. Secondly, we had in mind the recommendation of the Present Imam to enable the young generation to benefit more from the works of this martyred scholar which provide guidance to the Islamic society of modern Iran. We have, therefore, considered it our duty to offer the original text without any alteration, except a few phrases, to those readers interested in the works of Murtadha Mutahhari, We hope that they will find it acceptable.

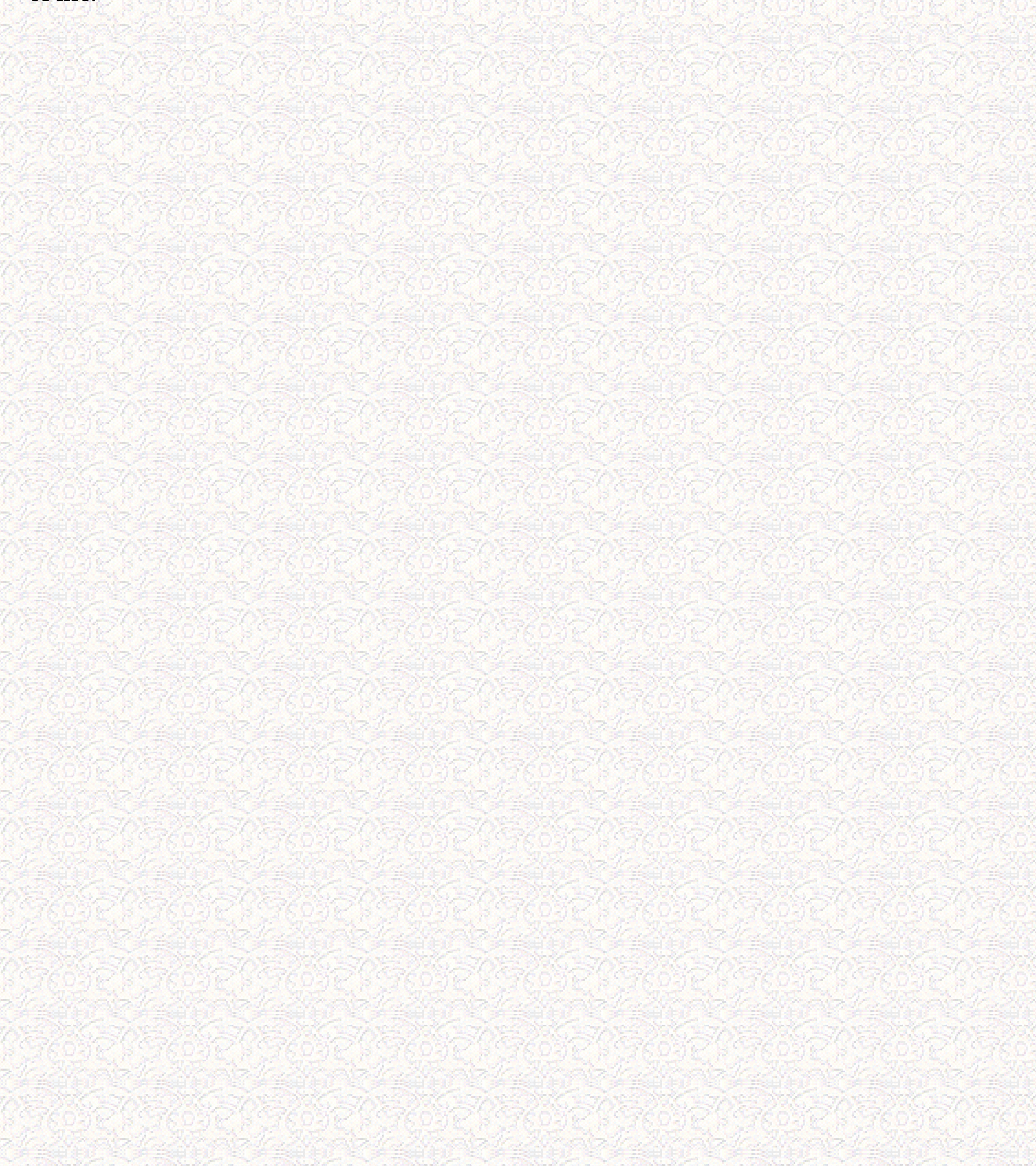
In these lectures, our scholar discusses the "Goal of Life" from the viewpoints of the Qur'an and various human schools of thought, and opens up the intellectual horizon in every direction to allow the human mind to assimilate freely. For if the goal of life is to be defined as the Qur'an requires it and to be heeded, it will be to gain a warmth and enlightened way of life, which will produce men and communities different from those of today, and this is what mankind is longing for.

Are all the pains and sufferings, which have made life so bitter for mankind today, not due to the lack of human recognition of the goal of life?

Life is not bitter and unpleasant in itself. It is deviation from the right path that imposes all

these pains and sufferings on mankind.

Today the young generation of our society is more than ever in need of an important discourse on life, such as presented here to avail its sublime spiritual revolution, to illuminate the dark paths of modernistic materialism through a precise knowledge of the goal of life.



Chapter 1

The Goal of Creation

One of the fundamental problems to investigate is the goal of life. Man always asks questions like what he lives for and what his objective in life should be. From the viewpoint of Islam, one would as well ask: "What is the objective and purpose of prophetic missions?"

The objective of the prophetic missions is not dissimilar to individual goals of men (peoples), for whom the prophets have been appointed; for, the prophets are sent to guide men towards certain goals. Going one step further, we could ask: "What is the goal of creation, of man as well as other creatures? "

This point requires an exact analysis. It may pertain to 'the goal of the Creator in Creation, the manifestation of His Will and Purpose. We cannot t assume a goal for God, and believe that He wishes to attain something by His acts. Such a supposition implies a shortcoming in the doer of an action, which may be true of creatures with a potential power, but not of the Creator; since it would mean that He intends to move towards perfection and secure something which He does not have. But sometimes by the goal of creation is meant the goal of the created action, not of the Creator. This would involve the movement of the created towards perfection, not the perfection of the Creator Himself. In this sense, if we think that the nature of creation has always been movement towards perfection, then there is a motive in creation.

This is actually the case, that is, each thing that is created has an independent stage of perfection ahead of it to be attained; and so for everything there exist stages of deficiency or perfection until the maximum limit is reached. The question of the 'motive in the creation of man' is basically one that refers to the 'nature of man'. It pertains to whatever talents are inherent in him, and whatever individual perfections are possible for him. Once perfections are accomplished by one, we may say he was created for them,

There is apparently no need to elaborate on the purpose and goal of the creation of man as a separate topic. It will be sufficient to see what kind of a creature man is, and what abilities are inherent in him. In other words as our discussion concerns the Islamic aspect of the matter, and not a philosophical one, we must see how Islam regards man and his abilities .

Naturally the mission of the prophets, too, is believed unanimously to facilitate man's perfection and to aid him to remove the deficiencies which neither he, as an individual, nor his society is able to remove. It is only with the aid of their divine revelations that he can advance towards enhancing perfection .

Accordingly, every individual must see what he can be after identifying his potentialities, so as to bring them to fruition. That is the goal of our life.

So far, the subject is treated in general, Now we must go into detail: Whether the Qur'an has discussed the goal of man, and whether it gives the reason for his creations as well as the mission of Prophets .

Very often we say that man is created for seeking happiness and God neither wants nor gets any benefit from man's Creation. Actually man is destined to choose his way freely, His guidance is a matter of duty and belief, not instinctive and compulsory. So, as he is free, he might as well choose the right way. [The Qur'an, Sura Al-Insan, Verse 3: "We have shown man the way to be grateful or ungrateful." (76: 3)] But what is happiness according to the Qur'an? It is often said that the purpose of man's creation and prophetic missions is to make man strong in knowledge and resolution, so that he may learn more and more, and secure the power to do what he desires .

Thus the purpose of creating a seed is to realize its potential to become a mature plant. Likewise, a lamb ' s herbivorous development into sheep manifests a purpose of creation (useful to man. Ed.). Man's potentiality is much superior, he is meant to be knowledgeable and able. The more he knows, the more he can use his knowledge and the nearer he will be to his human goal and purpose.

Sometimes it is said that the goal of human life is happiness in the sense that during the time one is alive, he should live comfortably and happily enjoy the blessings of Creation and nature, suffer less pain from either natural causes or from fellow- creatures. This is considered happiness. This means, then, getting maximum pleasure and minimum pain .

It is also said that the prophets too are sent to make it possible for man to secure maximum pleasure and have minimum pain. If the prophets have introduced the subject of the next world, it is meant as a continuation of this life. In other words, as a way has been shown for human happiness and as following it requires the granting of a reward, and opposition to it involves punishment, this reward and punishment are presented on the models of this world, so that the laws of this world would not be futile. Moreover, as the prophets were in no position as executives in this world to grant rewards or deal punishment, another world had to be offered where the good would be rewarded, and the wicked punished.

But we come across none of these statements in the Qur'an, where the purpose of creating jinns and human beings is given as 'worship'. [2 The Qur'an, 51:56] This may seem to us too difficult to understand. Of what use is worship for God? It does not benefit Him. Of what use is it to man? But this point has been explicitly mentioned in the Qur'an as the purpose of Creation. Contrary to the view that the next life is subsidiary to this one, the Qur'an says: "If there were no Resurrection, Creation would be futile." And again it says: "Do you suppose

that we have created you in vain?"[The Qur'an, 23:115] It is suggestive of something wisely done.

Is it assumed that creation is meaningless, and man does not return to God? In the verses of the Qur'an the question of Resurrection occurs repeatedly with +he matter of the rightfulness of creation. Its reasoning is based on the implication that this world has a God, and He does nothing in vain, and all is rightful and not in play, and there is a return to Him who accounts for the whole universe. We never come across this idea in the Qur'an that man is created in order to know more and act more to attain his goal. He is created to worship, and the worship of God is in itself a goal. If there is no question of knowing God which is the preface to worship, then man has failed in his advance towards the goal of creation, and from the viewpoint of the Qur'an he is not happy. The prophets, too, are sent to guide him towards that happiness which is the worship of God.

Thus the goal and ideal that Islam offers is God, and everything else is preparatory to it, and not of an independent and fundamental importance. In the verses where the Qur'an mentions perfect human beings, or speaks on their behalf, it says they have truly understood the goal of life and endeavored to attain it. It says for Ibrahim ("I have devoted my worship to Him who has created heaven and earth, and I am not a pagan." [The Qur'an, 6:80] This Sura, too, says: "My prayer, worship, life and death are for God, who is the Lord of the Universe . " [The Qur'an, 6:163]

This monotheism of the Qur'an is not merely an intellectual one, thinking that the origin of universe is one thing and its Creator is another. It includes the faith and conviction of man that there is only one Creator, and his goal, which is the only worthy one, is He alone. All other goals are the product of this one and subsidiary to it.

Thus, in Islam everything revolves round the axis of God, including the goal in the mission of prophets and individuals' goal of life.

Now let us study the question of worship. In the second verse, Ibrahim's words show pure devotion and he shows himself a thoroughly devoted servant of God who is ruled by no thought but that of God.

Concerning the reason for the mission of prophets, the Qur'an offers several explanations. In Sura Ahzab, Verses 33, 45 and 46 it says: "O, Prophet, We sent you as witness, harbinger and giver of warning, to invite towards God by his leave, and to be a bright light." Thus a prophet is a witness to the people's deeds; a harbinger of the good deeds recommended by the prophets; an agent of warning against evil acts, and a man who calls human beings towards God, which is by itself an ultimate goal.

Elsewhere a prophet's mission is mentioned as a duty to bring people out of darkness into

light. So, it is clear that the people are called upon to know God The prophets are the link between creatures and the creator.

In another verse another point is mentioned as the goal in the mission of the prophets: "Truly we sent our prophets with clear proofs and with them we sent the Book and true measure, so that the people rise in justice, and we sent iron in which there is great firmness and benefits for people ..." [The Qur'an, 57:25] In this verse by measure is probably meant law, so that justice will prevail. Thus, the prophets have come to establish justice, and this is another aspect of their objective.

Justice cannot, as people like Ibn Sina argues, be truly established among people without an equitable law, which for two reasons cannot be devised by man. Firstly, man cannot distinguish truth completely or free himself from personal bias, Secondly, there is no guarantee for its execution, for, man's nature makes him prefer himself to others. So, when the law is in his favour, he accepts it, and when it is against his interest, he rejects it.

A law must be of a kind to which man submits, and such a law must come from God to induce obedience in man's deep conscience. This just law is from God, and to have a guarantee for its execution, rewards and punishments must be devised, and to enable people to have faith in them, they must know God himself. Thus, knowing God is? for several reasons, a pre-requisite for the establishment of justice.

Even worship is set up to prevent people from forgetting the legislator and to remember Him always as an overseer, With this argument, calling people to God is another goal, otherwise there would be no motive for knowing Him,

In this way, we have three types of logic, The first one is that the goal in the mission of the prophets is only the establishment of justice among people and securing for them a happy life in this world, Accordingly, knowing God and having faith in Him and in Resurrection are all pre-requisites to hat. The second logic is quite the reverse, that is, knowing God and worship and proximity to God are the main goal, and justice is secondary Man' s spirituality in this world is predicated on his social life, and social life without law and justice is not possible. So, law and justice are pre-requisites for worshipping God. Thus attending to social problems which we consider so important today in connection with justice are objectives of the Prophets, but its importance remains secondary.

The third view questions the necessity of envisaging a separate goal for the prophets' mission and another for Creation and life, and thereby the need of considering one of them as the principal goal and the other as a subsidiary one We may say the prophets have had two independent goals, one of them as a link between man and God for the sake of worshipping Him, and secondly to establish justice among people; so we may put aside the idea of one of them being a pre-requisite to the other.

You can find examples of this in the Qur'an, where the matter of the purification of self is emphasised, and salvation is stated to depend on it Is self-purification a goal in Islam? Is it a goal or a pre-requisite, pre-requisite for what? For knowing God, and linking to Him and worshipping Him? Or for the establishment of social justice? According to this view, as the prophets' mission sought the establishment of social justice, social evils and goodness are distinguished. They recommend human beings to avoid the evils, such as envy, pride, selfishness, sensuality, etc, and cherish virtues such as truthfulness, integrity, affection, modesty, etc Or should it be claimed that self-purification is in itself an independent goal?

Which of the above views should be accepted? To our way of thinking the Qur'an never approves of dualism in any sense. The Qur'an is a monotheistic book in every sense of the word It says: "God has no like or equal "[The Qur'an, 42:11] It represents all the Attributes of God in their utmost perfection.[The Qur'an, 20: 8: "All the best Names are His," "The Most Exalted Attribute is only God's." (16: 60)] It admits of no partners for Him, and no rival, and says all power belongs to Him and to none other. It is also monotheistic in not attributing any goal as a fundamental, independent and ultimate to the universe but God. For man, too, in both his creation and his obligations and actions, no goal but God is recognised,

There is all the difference between a man who wants Islam, and a man who believes in just schools of philosophy. Many of the things said by Islam are the same as those of others, but not in the same perspective. Islam always regards matters in a monotheistic perspective.

In philosophy, as we said before, man has reached a stage where he says that the world is governed by a series of constant and unalterable laws. The Qur'an says the same but in the divine context. [The Qur'an: 35: 43; "You will never find God's Way alterable."] The Qur'an does not only accept the principle of social justice, but considers it most significant, though not as an ultimate goal, nor as a pre-requisite to what we understood by worldly happiness .

Islam accepts worldly happiness within the practical constraints of monotheism, that is, to be wholly devoted to God.

According to the Qur'an, man gains his happiness only from God, and it is He who fills all the gaps in his life, and satisfies him. The Qur'an says: "Those who have faith and their hearts are tranquil in thinking of God, know that all hearts find peace by remembering God ."[The Qur'an: 13:28] Only God brings repose to the anxious and inquisitive hearts of man. Other things are subsidiary and preliminary matters, not the final stage. The same is said of worship: "To remember God, pray." [The Qur'an: 20:14]

Also, the following verse says: "Prayer checks wickedness and injustice, and remembering God is more important."[The Qur'an: 29:45] Islam thinks of man as created to worship God, to seek proximity to Him and to know Him, all of which give him power. But knowledge and power are not the ultimate goal, nor is self-purification.

The Basis of Individual and Social Ethics

In his life, both personal and social, man is in need of a number of non-material objectives. Every social system requires a number of objectives which are common between individuals, without which social life would be impossible in its true sense. For, social life means co-operation and attainment of common goals, both material and spiritual.

The common goals of some people may be material, such as commercial or industrial companies which are formed by a number of people providing the capital and others providing the labor.

But human society cannot be managed like a company, since its basis is quite different from that of a firm, This is of course, our view, while there are others like Bertrand Russell who think that the basis of social ethics is only individual interest. They consider social ethics as a kind of contract between individuals, which they uphold as the best means of safeguarding their interests. Russell gives the following example to illustrate his point. He says: "I wish to get possession of my neighbor' s cow, but I realize that if I do so, his reaction will be to seize mine, and another neighbor, too, may do the same. Thus, instead of getting a profit, I suffer a loss. So I consider it advisable to respect his right and let him keep him cow, so that I may

Russell believes the basis of social ethics to be a respect for individual rights. We may say robbers, too, have the same relationship, in being bound together for robbing and enforcing some kind of justice among themselves, since they cannot act alone . That is why we say that Russell' s motto is at variance with his philosophy . His motto is humanitarian, but his philosophy is contrary to it By considering self-interest as the basis of social ethics, we are making it compulsory for an individual to co-operate with others since he fears their reaction if they possess similar power and strength. But if a man reached a stage where he was sure that others were too weak to hurt him, there is no need to observe those moral principles.

Suppose Nixon and Brezhnev to be equally powerful, In facing each other they calculate that it is to their interest to respect their mutual expectations But if each of them faces a weak nation, there is no necessity for such a respect. Russell's criticism of the United States in fighting Vietnam would then appear to be unacceptable!

In any case, their school of thought is injudicious, for, it permits the strong to constrain the weak, If the weak have no tolerance for constraint they must try to become strong. Politically this may be true, but it is not ethics, for, the weak cannot persuade the strong to act otherwise. Arbitrary conduct would seem permissible for the strong in the political school of thought,

Any school of thought may be based on the same common material goals, but it ought to suggest other ways of checking depravity. By saying that the causes of individual aggression should be investigated and then removed, these causes are not necessarily related to human or intellectual or educational constraints.

If you ask what barrier there is against the aggression of the strong against the weak, they may say: the society should be built from the beginning in such a way that there would exist no strong or weak individuals in it. If the sources of strength and weakness are discovered and removed, then all men will be at the same level, and because of their equality of power, they will respect one another. That is possible, according to them, by doing away with private ownership of wealth/property. Getting rid of ownership will put an end to human inequalities/ transgressions A society where all men have a common material goal, will be managed like a real co-operative enterprise in which there will be no injustice .

The school of Marxism is almost such a school, where no emphasis is laid on human spirituality and there is no talk of moral conscience etc, The emphasis is on ownership which, according to them, is the source of all wickedness and oppression. private ownership is replaced by state or societal ownership, so that each individual works according to his ability and receives compensation from the state or society in proportion to his needs . This is believed to be naturally conducive to establishment of peace, tranquility, justice and good morals will be established there. All evils, such as enmity, hatred and other complexes, are then expected to be removed, and all will live in brotherhood and equality.

But this is all wrong for the following reasons: It is actually shown that in societies where private ownership has been abolished, oppression, and deviation continue to exist. If the socialists were right in their reformatory claim, as soon as society is organized on a communist basis, it would be impossible for it to suffer corruption again. On the other hand, we have often witnessed that communist societies purge their own leading members from time to time. Private ownership, therefore, cannot be the only factor for gaining privileges.

Firstly, privileges do not consist only of money and deals, There are many others which are valued by human beings, For a woman being more beautiful than others is an advantage, which has nothing to do with ownership, and in a communist system, too, it has its own place.

More important than that are the privileges of rank and position, Rockefeller who has been one of the richest men in the world, has always had a longing for being elected President of the United States. Sometimes such a desire is so strong that many a wealthy man is willing to sacrifice most of his wealth to fulfill it, and gain fame and honor as a man of power. Man has always valued being respected by others no matter whether it is through fear, or affection and devotion.

Are there not men who would be in the place of Ayatullah Boroujerdi, so that people would be eager to meet them, kiss their hands, bring gifts to them, and feel honored to be received by them? Do they not wish to be a king so that hundreds of officers and men would stand to attention before him, even if it is through fear? These things, then, are valued by human beings, otherwise they would not be willing to lose everything else to gain such an advantage.

Therefore, the root cause of human transgressions and social evils is not only wealth. There are also other factors which cannot be overcome by communism,

Secondly, when other privileges are secured by their previous advantages, even in a communist society the profits of those possessing better advantages are greater. Foe example, would the interest on the wealth of a Soviet leader be equal to that of a peasant, even if he represents the peasantry. A peasant may never get the experience of travel by Place even once in his life, while his leader has the best aircraft at his disposal. Therefore, it cannot be claimed that the advantage of wealth is solved by communism, nor that individuals will benefit equally from societal wealth .

Do our own civil servants benefit equally from public funds which are beyond private ownership. A man in a higher position enjoys much higher advantages than an ordinary employee.

What is significant is that even in the same communist societies, there arise needs for self-sacrifice and relinquishment of material advantages. For example, a soldier who goes to fight and is killed, is not killed on the basis of mutual interest. He must be motivated by certain ideals or sentiment to be willing to offer his life for their sake. So, the most materialistic school cannot do without some kind of spiritual values, even if he turns his conviction into something to be worshipped.

A school of thought of a community based merely on material interest, cannot be really comprehensive or practical. How do communist leaders act in connection with the principles, ideals, mottos and symbols of their system?

They act as if their system is above everything else, while in fact it is only a means of attaining life's interests, On the basis of materialistic school, their principle is like an architect's plan for a building. There is nothing sacred about a plan, It is only an aid to construction. The best plan is subsidiary to the building for which it is drawn up. The most that can be said of a school of thought is that it is the best plan for a society, but why should the plan itself be considered as something to be worshipped? The plan is for a building, and the building is for me; so why should I be sacrificed for the plan?

Such a claim is nonsense, and still a system is rarely regarded as only a means for building a

society, It is often looked upon as something sacred for which it would be an honor to give up one's life. Its followers may think their claim baseless, yet they will have to inculcate themselves and others with a spirit of sacrifice.

Now let us see what comprise spiritual goals or values. Are they real or only suggestions to deceive simpletons? Why are they considered of much higher worth than material values?

What is a value after all? When a person performs a task willingly, it is for a purpose, a purpose which is important to him, whether it is material or spiritual. It means that that purpose has an interest for him, otherwise he would never follow it. It is said that absolute purposelessness or futility is impossible.

From a material viewpoint, it is obvious that I will be drawn to whatever is useful for me and for the continuation of my life; for, I am naturally attached to my life instinctively. The word value can be used for material things, as well as spiritual ones. A physician can have value for me. So has medicine .

Material things are in reality physical or required for the body; exercise is also needed for the body, though it is not a substance. SO! food and exercise have value for us. Being charitable to others may have no material benefit for the doer; similarly serving society and the next generation may only be good deeds, but what are their values to him who serves?

A person makes a great effort to serve in an educational organization for the sake of the next generation, and receives no profit, and may even lose his time and the possibility of having a higher income, How should we regard this matter spiritually?

Spiritual matters are very important in human life. The question may be asked whether spirituality is confined to the faith in God, or whether it is possible to have no such faith and yet have a number of spiritual values to govern human life.

Sartre in his book on "Genuineness of Man" quotes this sentence of Dostoevsky: "If there were no God, everything would be permissible." This means that goodness and badness, truth and falsehood, treason and service all depend on whether we believe in God or not, If we have no such belief, then there will be no barrier, and everything is allowed. Is this true or not?

There is one thing peculiar to Marxists that, as materialists, they claim that they have nothing to do with spirituality, or humanity, and if they refer to sound humanism, they imply a classless society, According to them men are either sound or deficient, and their defects arise from private ownership of property and socio-economic class differences. Once these differences are removed, human beings return to their previous state of soundness. They believe in no other perfection for man and no other progress or evolution.

What about recent schools of thought like Sartre's, which are materialistic and yet believe in spiritual values like humanism, and speak of human responsibility? On the one hand they believe man to be free from any divine sovereignty, or rule of nature, and his will does not by any means depend on the past, It is man who builds himself up, not environment, or destiny or God; so he is responsible for himself, Therefore any act chosen and done by him, must be good. In this way he makes himself a model for others to imitate, and to this extent he is responsible for the conduct of others, too.

Now let us see what this responsibility is and what it means, It is a spiritual matter, not a material one, In a materialistic school they may say, a human being has a conscience which answers questions of responsibility If they believed that man has two personalities, an animal one and a human one, when he commits an offence, the former is chastised by the latter, That would be something But they deny the existence of conscience. So, where is the root of responsibility?

In any case they believe in responsibility, and that is a spiritual matter. They say: "1 am responsible before mankind and before the next generation. What does that mean? They belong to a materialistic school, and yet they want to build up humanism (or spirituality) and make men submit to it, They cherish this idea, but minus God. Sartre even says: "If God enters all this, then there exists no spirituality, for, the basis of it all is human liberty, and God's presence means lack of liberty, and thus responsibility without liberty of choice is meaningless .

Someone may say: "What prevents us from believing in spirituality without belief in God? For, there is a conscience inherent in man ' s nature, which enables him to enjoy good deeds, and abhor wicked acts. He performs good deeds not for the sake of material benefits, but simply because he enjoys doing do, as he enjoys knowledge of history or geography etc., the only profit of which for him is a greater awareness. Similarly, ethical matters give him pleasure." Epicurus, the Greek philosopher, supports this idea. Omar Khayyam, too, is said to believe in it. Hence Epicurism was applied later on to every type of pleasure-seeking unconcern. But it is claimed that in his real school, Epicurus also believed in spiritual pleasures which were more lasting and more easily secured. Love of beauty flowers, birds, songs, etc. is another example of pleasure without having any material benefit, but giving the spirit some enjoyment.

All those remarks may be true to some extent, but they involve two limitations. Firstly, man's conscience may not be sufficiently identifiable in depth to provide a basis for a school of thought. If a human being does something only for pleasure, it is only as far as the border of death or successive imprisonment, and within the field of diversion, but not in the form of profound needs which are identified by a school of thought. No one is ready to give his life for flowers in his garden. He wants to be alive to enjoy them. Helping others gives pleasure, but no one is willing to die for it.

So, it is true that one enjoys good deeds in the depth of his conscience, and the Qur'an, too, recognises this. However, even conscientiousness does not provide a basis for a school of thought. It requires a much deeper faith. So, if someone says that Imam Husain (a) came to Karbala and offered his own life and those of his young followers, as a way of merely satisfying his urge to serve people, this is not a true judgment. This is because he was evidently motivated by not only his conscientiousness, but his deeper faith.

If there is no God and no order of objectiveness, and no intrinsic connection between man and things, should we not say that there is an error in nature? Schoepenhauer says: "Nature, in order to mislead people and send them after its own purpose, offers them pleasures." For example, nature desires the survival of creatures. If it orders a man to marry and work to support his wife and children, an intelligent man would not do so. But nature deceives him in such a way that he willingly seeks marriage In any case every pleasure is based on a need. We eat because our nature requires that substance, and drink and sleep for a similar reason. If we had no need, we would not resort to them.

The reason for material enjoyments is clear, but what about spiritual pleasures? If I watch an orphan feed, why should I be pleased? It has nothing to do with me, and so this pleasure is futile, for, there is no basic wisdom in it. But if we believe in an inter-relationship in world order and in a creation based on wisdom, then we consider all human beings as fellow-members of a single community, who seek the pleasure of witnessing others' wellbeing. This is so because we follow a true principle in creation. But if this pleasure is accidental and only due to one's natural make-up, again it would be futile, since it lacks a natural objective, Therefore, while we believe in a moral conscience and claim that men naturally benefit by good deeds and lose by evil ones, again our actions would be futile without a belief in God and in the goal of creation.

When we believe in a moral conscience granted by God to man to attain a goal, then an orphan and an old woman and myself will be considered fellow- members of an organization and parts of a general plan. Thus, we follow a divine will and wisdom and try to attain that goal. Then nothing is futile and everything is real and true.

Therefore every school of thought and every social system needs a number of spiritual ideas; an ideology which is above material values, and is so strong that it becomes sacred. This sacredness may be considered worthy enough by a man to sacrifice his personal life for it.

A school of thought, such as indicated above, is reminiscent of the poet Sa'di:

"The wind and clouds, the sun and the and firmaments are all busy working, So that you may gain a livelihood, and not spend it in negligence,"

It believes in a responsibility for every created thing. Or, as the Qur'an says (31:20): "Do you not see that God tamed for you everything on the earth and in heaven?" Thus, each thing in creation is meant for a purpose, and it performs its task accordingly .

Therefore, man, too, has a responsibility, in an ocean of responsibilities. But a system which considers things to be without an ultimate goal, believes in no responsibility for any creature, but confines it to man. Why this should be so, is not explained .

Ideals are fundamental for every school of thought, in order to give an individual, as well as society, something to work for. And, these ideals are meaningless without a belief in the Creator and His Wisdom manifest in the Creation.

Faith, Schools of Thought and World Vision

Intellectual and philosophical definition, as well as faith are essential requirements of a soundly conceived ideology.

It presupposes a universal perspective based on a particular logic and insight and supported by a systematic reasoning concerning the world, as well as faith. Faith gives it the power of creating attachment and love for objectives higher than the individualistic and private ones, a fact recognised in some modern schools of thought like existentialism.

They intend to create an ideology minus faith. They wish to set up a system on pure philosophy, without faith, as a kind of love for a higher objective, and that is not possible.

Sometimes they set up a remote shadow which is based on human fancy, and nothing more. Yet, an ideology is based on faith that makes it sacred, If its foundation is not faith and is merely an intellectual system, it cannot rouse love and affection, since it lacks a logical basis, though it can be imposed by force or suggestion.

A school of thought is a single, practical system, and not only a theoretical one or something related to theoretical sciences. This system means the idea about what exists. For example, Aristotle's or Newton's physics each represents a theoretically conceived system.

A practical system is what it is. For the ancients too, knowledge was divided into theoretical and practical. In an empirical system, an investigation aims at finding out the best way, such as concerning how should man live, and how a society ought to be, One pillar of it is organization, which consists of parts each of which has its own place, task and significance. It cannot be a collection of scattered thoughts which cannot lead to a coherent system, A school of thought is a collection of harmonious ideas related to real life, that is, what it should be and what it should not be. Theoretical thoughts are its basis and spirit, That is why we said every ideology is based on a universal perspective, which, in turn, means viewing the world as it is, as distinct from viewing man as he should be. The spirit of a school of thought must, on one hand, possess vision and evaluation of existence, and on the other, create ideals, that is, not only a philosophical basis but a religious basis . It should offer something to be loved, a moral, as well as a social ideal, Astronomy gives us some knowledge about the celestial bodies that exist But it says nothing about how they should be or should not be, since such matters do not concern human life.

A school of thought offers something in which an ideal is presented to man. Monotheism is capable of providing a basis for philosophizing in an universal perspective, so as to obtain an

insight into existence. At the same time, it represents the uniqueness of God, as contained in the Qur'anic expression: "There is no god, but God . "

The ancients divided monotheism into several kinds; Monotheism of Essence, of Attributes, of Deeds, and of Worship.

Monotheism of Essence means a belief that God has no equal or partner. Monotheism of Attributes means that His Essence is not contrary to His Attributes, which, in turn, are not contrary to one another. In his unity and Wisdom He possesses all perfections. Monotheism of Deeds means also the unity of acts, Monotheism of Worship means that He only is worthy of worship and must be worshipped and this is inherent in the soul of man. The Qur'an (3: 83) says: "Do you seek other than God's religion, while everything in heaven and on earth is bound to obey Him?

Our worship is in fact a kind of voluntary surrender and obedience, as indicated in Genesis [The Qur'an: 62: 1, 61: 1, and 13: 15] in which everything that is created sings His praises. In Monotheism of worship, God's Essence is the ideal of man. As He is unique, there is no dualism for Him, and He is the origin of Universe, and the only object of worship, and worthy of it. Thus, monotheism has two properties: it is firstly a kind of vision and evaluation of existence, and secondly an ideal for man .

Marxism is entirely different, It is a materialistic vision, which accounts for living, but is not an ideal, and can never offer an ideal, aside from an economic kind, It offers to safeguard the interests of deprived classes as an objective and tells them to try and seize their rights. But this is only a defective goal. and may be supposed to be an ideal until one attains it, and once attained, what then? It is an end of ideology and goal.

A materialistic goal cannot be construed as a sacred goal, It is not above human objectives and self-sacrifice in it is illogical, since it comprises the materialistic ideal. To secure material gains through self-sacrifice is essentially self-contradictory, Can that be called an ideal?

Marxism is in fact an absence of ideals and is a return to individual instincts. Its power lies in breaking fetters. It cannot account for all aspects of life, including political, social, economic, and moral ones, except indirectly, In such a case justice and ethics lose their real meanings.

A school of thought may evidence a spirit determined by the relationships of cause and effect, However, a school of thought must have a suitable idea so as to lend a world perspective. The converse is not true, since a world vision without a suitable ideal does not by itself provide an overall elan or spirit in a school of thought.

To be constructive, man looks to the future, not to the past and present. Therefore, philosophy alone is not enough. World visions have also another difference with one another; one of them creates an obligation, while another does not. In other words, one of them gives man responsibility, while another does not.

Monotheistic world vision creates a divine obligation, Others like existentialism lack a spiritual foundation. A man may say: "I am responsible for myself, because I am free," But this kind of freedom does not make sense, since it is unrelated to everything else, thus causing many difficulties. Suppose I am free and ungoverned by any obligation, either environmental or divine, So, as they say, I am responsible for myself, and none else is responsible for me. Does that involve responsibility to others, too? Should I choose something for myself which would be profitable for others also? If they put this responsibility on me, where does it come from? Others are free, too, and that absolute freedom has no harmony with responsibility before others.

In this kind of freedom they speak of, becoming a model for others is also meaningless. It would mean giving generality to my choice and claim that that choice is not only good for me, but also for others. But others are free, too, and no agent can be preferred to one's own will.

Moreover, we may agree so far that my choice may be so proper that it would affect and encourage others in their choice, But this influence is different from a feeling of responsibility in my conscience. Who would create an obligation in me to act in a particular way or not, keeping in view its effect on others? Is there a God to call me to account? You would say 'no'. Is there a conscience? Again, you would say 'no', Who then?

Monotheistic world vision, because of its ability to create ideals, obligation and responsibility, also serves as a guide. It shows the way to attain its goal, It gives joy and encouragement, and promotes in us a spirit of self-sacrifice. Above all, as Tabatabai, the great scholar, has said, it can be an element consisting of all the elements of teachings, The principle of monotheism is like water which saturates the roots of all thoughts, or like blood which carries the food to all parts of the body, or like a spirit which gives life and dynamism to a school of thought,

Concerning an ideal, Sartre and others say that man should not stop at a boundary, but he should go beyond it and change the previous plan for a new goal, and in this way advance constantly, This means perpetual motion in a direction without having a definite goal and destination from the beginning, like someone who walks as far as he can see until a new horizon opens before him to go on, He does not wish to reach a definite point, for, he considers it the point of death.

In monotheism, however the goal is always there from the very beginning, clear, and

unlimited, as well It always remains new and challenging. No other world vision constitutes the source and spirit of a school of thought, as both an ideal and a motivating force. At the same time, monotheism creates obligation, produces joy, provides guidance and encourages self-sacrifice, It sustains comprehensive development of a community, so that all problems may be solved, It is only monotheistic world vision which is comprehensive enough to possess all the above qualities.

Chapter 4

Islamic Faith and Human Perfection

What is that faith which is spoken of in Islam and referred to throughout the Qur'an, as an axis around which all questions revolve? It refers to faith in God in the first place. In the second place, it connotes faith in angels, holy books, prophets, Resurrection, etc. In Islam, is faith a goal for mankind or a means for other goals?

All these are goals for man, for no divine goals or means are involved. These goals are meant as human accomplishments towards perfection.

Is faith itself a human perfection which has been recommended to him? Or has man been called upon to have faith because of its good effects? Philosophers put this question like this: "Is faith a blessing for man, or something useful?" There is a difference between a blessing and being useful. A blessing is in itself a perfection desired for itself, not for something else. But anything useful is good because of its beneficial effect. It is a prologue to a blessing, but not a blessing in itself.

In discussing Islam as a school of thought, it must be clarified whether faith is a goal and a blessing, irrespective of its effect. We speak of effects of faith and say it gives tranquility and fortitude against calamities, and in a society the people can trust one another, and show benevolence and avoid malevolence.

But is faith good because of its effects, or because it seeks perfection in itself? Here comes the question: What does human perfection consist of? This is more difficult to answer than the perfection of other matters. In the world we can often distinguish perfection of things. We can say how a perfect apple should be; it refers to its flavor, color, delicacy and shape, and if an apple has these qualities we call it perfect.

A perfect house can easily be defined, so can a horse. But it is most difficult to define a perfect human being Therefore various views concerning him must be studied to see which is right, or if we cannot do so scientifically, at least we should see how and to what extent such views are confirmed by the Qur'an.

Can it be said that a perfect being is he who gets maximum benefit from nature which is external to him? But this is wrong for two reasons:

Firstly we do not define other things in this way. We do not say a horse is perfect merely because it gets the highest benefit. We should consider its own particular qualities and assets. We do not think a horse perfect because of eating a large quantity of fodder. Nor do we call an apple perfect because of its getting more air, water and light. Secondly, it is hard to conscientiously agree that the most perfect man is one who benefits most from nature For it implies that a defective man is he who benefits less or least!

Let us compare two human beings: Muawiyah enjoyed maximum benefits in his eighty years of life. He was ruler of Syria for forty years (Twenty years as a powerful governor, and another twenty as a powerful Caliph).

Then there was Ali (a) who lived an ascetic life, with a philosophy for it, whether this philosophy was to be free, or generous or humane, or not to be taken in by the world, but to give his heart to spiritual things, Whatever it was, his share of this world's gifts was a few loaves of bread, Should we then call him imperfect on account of his benefiting least from the world?

If we say this, we are making out man to be less than an animal, for, we do not evaluate any animal by the standard of its benefiting from the world, even though some people have no other thought but this in evaluating human beings. But there is no one who believes this to the extent of negating every spirituality.

Here another point comes up, that is, if such benefiting is not human perfection in this world, what about the next one? This would mean the perfection of man is to deserve and benefit from God's gifts. However, this is not possible in its utmost measure in this world, so people pray for securing maximum benefit in the next world. In speaking of such worship, Ibn Sina (Avicenna) says; "For such men worship is like working for which a wage is expected so that, without that wage, there would be no willingness to work."

From the viewpoint of Islamic logic, such a belief would mean a deficient kind of worship, to show devotion and worship only in order to be rewarded in heaven, There are many references to this by the Imams (t) such as this:

"Those who worship for fear, act like slaves fearing their master." Similar are the words of Ali [The Nahj ul Balaghah, Wisdom 229: "Some worship God for the sake of their desires, and that is merchants' worship; some worship for fear, and that is slaves' worship; and some worship out of gratitude and that is the worship of the noble,"]

Again, in another saying, Ali (a) is even more explicit: "O God, I do not worship you for fear of your Fire or for cupidity in desiring heaven; I worship you because you are worthy of it."

Therefore, it is not right to think of human perfection as the ability to secure maximum material benefits, even by negating every virtue in this world, or to postpone such benefits to future life. There are various materialistic views all of which end with the idea of benefit, Spiritual views are of the following types:

1)

The first and perhaps the most important is the view of the gnostics concerning "Perfect Man ." Their view is derived from various religions They are inspired by ideas, such as 'Adam', 'Prophets', 'Saints' and the 'Perfect Man' like the "awaited Mahdi" . Mackinion has written a book entitled "Perfect Man in Islam" which has been translated into Arabic by Abdur Rahman Badawi, In it he says: "The theory of perfect man is not a Hellenic bequest, for, Greek philosophy has said nothing of it . "

In the Islamic world this topic has been presented by the Sufis, and especially by Mohuyuddin Arabi. There are similar books by Abdo-Karim Deylami, Aziz-el-Din Nasafi, and a Sufi poet called Sayed Muhammad Borgheti. The gnostics have a clear view about man's perfection and a perfect man, which may not be wholly acceptable to others, but they offer it with a decisive finality.

They believe that there is one truth and that is God. They consider other things shadows of the truth. In their opinion everything is an attribute of God. If we die without recognizing the truth we would have died in infidelity, ignorance, darkness and absolute unawareness.

A man is perfect when he understands the truth and attains it They think it impossible for God to appear in man or be allied to him, For them incarnation is dualism, so attaining the truth or God means losing one's identity in Him, and that is when man understands the whole truth, and then he will know himself. God is the only truth and everything else is its manifestation, This is some- what similar to the phrase of 'approaching God, except that they believe in phases of proximity, subject to a definite order. So, there are stages of gnosticism before truth is attained, One who does not attain it is imperfect, and man's humanity consists of knowing and attaining truth.

What helps this advance towards God and truth are love, affection and familiarity. The way to Him is through the heart, not the mind or philosophy Every other perfection is derived from this perfection, and for that reason alone it may be considered perfection. Is asceticism perfection? They will say, yes, because it is a condition for following this path. So are humility and other qualities like assistance, and guidance which are moral goodness.

2)

Divine philosophers have a view different from that of the gnostics. They think human perfection depends on two things: (1) recognition of facts, or wisdom. Gnostics emphasize truth, but the philosophers attach importance to wisdom, which for them is understanding the reality of things and existence as they are, generally but not to wisdom. For example, the properties of an apple are related to science, not to wisdom. Similarly knowing a city or a house as a whole unit, is different from knowing parts of it.

A sage considers human perfection is the general context of proper and scientific recognition of the universe, His subjective world is a scientific and intellectual one which corresponds with the objective world. For example in an objective world there is God, and His Universal Order, material, and immaterial, In the scientific and intellectual world, too, these things must exist.

For them, then, a perfect human being must recognize wisdom. We may discuss the proof and evidence of wisdom, but we cannot discuss its origin and principle, The Qur'an, too; says (1:269): "The blessing of wisdom may be granted to anyone who He wishes, and he who received it, found much goodness. "

Beside wisdom, as a requisite of perfection, a sage also considers justice as a requisite, that is, moral justice on which social justice depends. This means that there should be an equilibrium between human powers and instincts ruled over by his intellectual power. In other words, the intellect must dominate all appetites, passions and imagination, so that each of these powers should be given the moderate share it deserves. In the terminology of a sage what is related to wisdom is called speculative intellect, and what is related to justice is a named practical intellect.

The question that was about 'faith' may be repeated in connection with wisdom, Does wisdom represent to a man an end or means? And is knowledge an end in itself or means, or both?

Is knowledge human perfection? If it is, then it involves benefits, and without benefits it is useless, and the more it benefits, the better it is.

3)

A third view is that human perfection lies in sentiments, that is, love. This is an ethical viewpoint that claims that a man who has more affection for others is perfect, and if he shows little affection to others he is imperfect, The basis of moral depravity is selfishness; the more one abandons selfishness and shows love for others, the more perfect he is. This is a point emphasised also by Hindus. Gandhi insists thoroughly on this point in his book "This is my Faith . " Hindus emphasize both truth and love, and criticize western civilization which has negated these two things.

4) Another view is that human perfection is beauty. This, of course, does not refer only to physical beauty, but mainly to spiritual beauty. Artistic things show an artistic spirit which creates beautiful things.

5)

Another view which may be called a prevalent western one is materialistic, and holds that human perfection lies in power. The more powerful a man is and the more dominating over his environment and other beings, the more perfect he is. Darwin's Theory of Evolution reflects this idea. According to Darwin's criteria, a more perfect being must be powerful enough to preserve himself and remove his rival in the struggle for survival. Darwin is criticized for having annihilated morality by his survival principle. Some Westerners claim to have discovered that knowledge is what benefits mankind, makes him more powerful, and prevails over nature. Thus they promoted empirical science, to be used as an instrument of developing civilization and technology .

This idea had its uses, but they went to such excess that it caused more damage than benefit. They ignored the sacredness of wisdom, truth, love and faith in which men had believed before. To them, everything became

subordinate to power, and so they tried to change the course of human advancement. Since then, mankind tends to be devoid of faith in any spirituality, and if they claim spirituality they act in a contrary manner.

Nietsche' s philosophy, has been criticized for being too extravagant . In any case he has been frank and outspoken. The logical conclusion of his (and of the intellectual path Bacon and others have followed) is to place science in the service of power, and to recognize human perfection only in power.

Summing up Islamic Monotheism

What is the viewpoint of Islam concerning human perfection? When a school of thought wishes to build up a following, it must provide guidance and strengthen the resolution of its following, it presents its goal to them, and asks them to follow it,

The goal of Islam is the same as the true objective of a Muslim, The conceptualization of a perfect human being is in fact a discussion of the fundamental Islamic ideal and its ideology.

Various views concerning human perfection and a perfect being have already been discussed, and here a summary of them will be given.

According to the gnostics, truth is the basis of everything. By truth, they mean the Essence of God, and His manifestation is the shape of created things and beings. Man, too, as a more wholesome creature gains perfection through his return to Him, Thus everything but truth which is God, is His shadow, while in itself it is a reality. God means absolute God, and nothing is equal to and comparable with Him, They believe also that man can attain unity with God, or, as they say, can be annihilated in His essence. Man is a being, separated from his Originator, Man's perfection and happiness consist of his return to his origin in God's Essence. They also offer ways and means to attain this goal, and this lies through the whole of man's essence, that is, his heart and its changes and transformations which remove the obstacles to perfect unity. Their means consist of love, worship and self-purification.

Divine philosophers, however, think differently, They consider man's essence to be his intellect, and other things are secondary matters, The perfection of the intellectual power has two aspects: speculative and practical. The speculative or theoretical aspect is wisdom which means the recognition of things as they are, and its practical aspect is justice, by which they mean that man's whole essence must be ruled over by intellect and not by instinct or other forces, According to Plato, his Theory of Republic points to a Utopia in which philosophers become rulers and rulers philosophers, This theory is also applied to individuals, and it is said that a man is happy when his essence is ruled over by philosophy, For them, attaining truth is not under consideration; they emphasize thought and reflection, not heart and spirit, The way to attain the goal is intellect, logic and reasoning.

Another group consider love to be human perfection, and that means forgetting self and loving others, so that there would be no boundary between self and others; and when there is a question of choice, others have priority over self. A being whose noble human sentiments have developed to their limit, may be considered a perfect being.

Yet another school of thought considers beauty to be the essence of human perfection, not only physical beauty, which is not significant, but spiritual beauty and high morality. This is the basic belief of the Socratic school They say truthfulness is good because it is beautiful. The word 'good' is applied to the senses as well as intellect.

Knowledge is for them a perfection because it is beautiful, and opposite, i.e. ignorance is ugly. Power and weakness, too, come under the same category. In Socratic ethics everything is based on either intellectual beauty or ugliness. Poetry, art and originality mean creation of beauty, and a creator of beauty must be beautiful himself to be able to create beauty. Only a beautiful spirit can compose a beautiful poem or paint a beautiful picture.

There is a story about one of the Qajar kings who composed one line of a couplet, and was unable to compose the second line. He sought the aid of various poets, until one of them supplied the second line, which was found to be the best, The first line was this:

"No one has ever seen beauty like Yusuf's,"

and the second line was the following:

"But He who created Yusuf (Joseph) has the true beauty."

And this is very true, for, only the Creator with utmost beauty can create beauty in His creatures.

Now let us see what Islam thinks about these views . Does Islam agree with the question of 'truth' as being perfection? We cannot wholly accept the gnostic view. For Islam God is not a Creator in the sense of a father - like being capable of procreating other beings. If so, what is He after accomplishing the task of creation? Is He like a father who has children, or a mere provider of livelihood to creatures, or according to Aristotle, the first motive power?

Islam's logic about God is much higher than that There is nothing that can be compared with Him. If he is 'Reality', then other things are a "mirage", or a 'shadow'. The Qur'an says (24; 35): "God is the light of heaven and the earth," It means, He is what He is, and other things, too, are attributable to Him. Other references to God in the Qur'an show that He is 'absolute truth. ' Again the Qur'an says (41: 53): "We will soon show them our signs in the world and in their minds to assure them that the Qur'an is true."

In fact, when someone has faith in God, everything else is reduced to nothing for him, for, he has found something compared with which other things are worthless, Sa'di has expressed this idea beautifully in his poetic work 'Boostan':

"The way of intellect is a maze; but, for the wise there is nothing but God ." And to explain

the matter of nothingness, he says: "This can be told to a discerner of truth, but men of conjecture will cavil at it, Saying, what, then, are heaven and earth? Who are human beings, beasts and demons?"

He, then, answers his questions and says they are not mutually incompatible:

"You, my wise friend, have asked well, and I will answer to your intellect's approval; That the sun, sea, mountain and firmaments, human beings, demons, jinn, and angels, Whatever they may be, they are too inferior to speak of existence, before His Essence."

If He is, other things are nothing. It is impossible to turn to another pole once a man knows God, or to assume anything as a goal. Thus, faith in Islam is higher than any possibility of comparison with any other maker but God, a truth and reality before which nothing may be considered true and real.

But is wisdom, which is claimed by a sage, of importance in Islam? The principle of wisdom, that is, recognition of facts as they are, is acceptable in Islam. The Qur'an says (2: 269): "He will grant the blessing of wisdom to anyone He wishes, and he who found it, received much goodness." How can we interpret this verse? Wisdom is called a human blessing, and is almost the equivalent of perfection, and not only something useful.

Justice, too, is similar, that is, social justice, Of course social justice is related to the perfection of individuals concerning moral justice. Islam believes in moderation with respect to powers and instincts, and rejects extravagance. It does not consider the rule of intellect alone adequate, should also be faith, Islam regards human power to philosophize as too weak to be a ruler of man, philosophy combined with faith can act as a governor,

But concerning 'love' in Islam, what more can be said than the following In a chapter of traditions entitled "Kindnesses and Mutual Affections", the Prophet (s) asks his companions: "What handle of faith is stronger?" Each of them gives a different answer, One says 'prayer', another says 'fasting' or 'pilgrimage', etc. He says: "What you said is true, but none of them is the strongest," They ask: "What is it then?" He answers: "Loving others for the sake of God . "

Which of the above beliefs are of first importance, and which are secondary? There is also the question of 'worship The Qur'an says (51: 56): "I did not create angels and human beings except to worship me," So, worship is presented as an objective There may, of course, be some who do not believe in this. We have already discussed the view that upholds material benefits, involving the negation of human perfection and existence of perfect beings. They consider everything, including knowledge, useful to the extent of benefiting mankind.

This has been the course of human thought since Bacon. Today that the claim is made that

society has advanced and evolved, which society is more perfect? Is it the one which is nearer reality or faith? Or the one which has attained more wisdom and justice or love? They say: "No, it is a society that can secure more benefits, more techniques, and more science, all of which have provided mankind with better living and greater material benefits ."

This greater benefit, as they see it, is no more than what is enjoyed by animals and plants to the extent of safeguarding bodily health and growth, and catering to lusts and appetites.

Thus according to them, there is no human perfection beyond animal and vegetable perfection. Science, too, is for man like a horn for an animal, that is, a weapon for survival.

Now let us consider worship. What is worship for? There are two ways of looking at it. For ordinary people worship is for obtaining a better reward from God in the next world. The rewards of this world are limited, so, worship gives the hope for deeper and greater compensation in after life, including houris, heavenly palaces, honey, delicious fruits and drinks!

But this is no more than animal perfection, even though it implies a lasting life hereafter.

But worship may have another meaning, It is not the worship of a slave, but of the free and noble. In the latter kind of worship securing benefits is never the objective, nor is it deliverance from physical and material sufferings. It is far above animal appetites, It is worship for the sake of love, affection and gratitude. It is then that worship finds a meaning equivalent to the love of truth, and God is then not considered as a means of life in this or the next world. God will, then, be truth itself and the true objective .

This type of worship assumes a lofty position, since it is not a means, but an end in itself.

Thus, there are different stages of worship: worship for satisfying animal desires in the next world is a kind of perfection in comparison with absence of worship and a positive attachment to material things. For, it means seeking from God something permanent, as against the transient selfishness and sensuality in this world.

But this worship is much inferior to the exalted and pure worship which is done for its own sake. So worship depends on faith and faith depends on truth. Islam has invited people to wisdom, justice, love and beauty.

But which of them is the main goal? Are they equally significant? Or is one of them the principal objective and the others subordinate to it?

We think that the goal is truth, that is, God. Islamic monotheism can only have this meaning. If Islam offers other goals such as heaven, or escape from hell, they are of secondary

importance. Wisdom by itself is not a goal, but as a means of attaining truth. Justice, too, is good in checking the animality of human spirit and removing artificial barriers in the way of truth. Love, too, in its effect helps to attain truth. There remains faith, which may be claimed as a goal in Islam. But is faith important because of its effects in removing anxiety, checking aggression, and creating mutual trust? Faith in God is by itself a goal. The effects of faith which are so numerous make it the link of man with God, and such a link is perfection from the viewpoint of Islam.